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STATEMENT OF

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COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

BEFORE THE

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
MILITARY CONSTRUCTION SUBCOMMITTEE

ON

FY08 MILITARY CONSTRUCTION

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I. Introduction

Chairman Edwards, Congressman Wicker, and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Other Related Agencies; thank you for the opportunity to report to you today on the state of your Marine Corps. In our recent meetings as well as previous testimony before this Congress, I have pledged to provide you with frank and honest assessments; I come here today again with that thought in mind.

For the past five years your Marine Corps has been immersed in what we believe are the first battles of a Long War – a generational struggle against Islamic extremists. The Marines in our operating forces are being pushed hard; strained by the operational tempo and the frequency of combat deployments – but their morale has never been higher – because they believe they are making a difference. Over two-thirds of our Marines have enlisted or re-enlisted since 9-11. They know full well what the Nation expects of its Marines in a time of war, and they are shouldering that duty with selflessness and courage.

Your Marines also believe that the people of the United States are behind them. The evidence of support is everywhere, and not just with yellow ribbons and bumper stickers: tangible support in the fielding of new materiel, the latest equipment to protect them while in harm's way, the reset of the force to accomplish follow on missions throughout the globe, and most recently, the proposal to grow our end strength.

Increasing the Corps to 202,000 Marines will greatly reduce the strain both on the individual Marines and on our institution as a whole. This end strength increase will gradually improve the deployment-to-dwell ratio of some of our most critical units, as well as ensuring that we are able to respond to the uncertainties of the Long War. Currently, many of our units are deployed for seven months and home for only seven – some even less time – before they return to combat. The conflict in Iraq is the latest demonstration of the incontrovertible requirement for “boots on the ground.” Even in the face of rapidly improving technology, our current request for an increase to our end strength is exactly what the Marine Corps needs, if we are to respond whenever and wherever our vital national interests are threatened – not just in Iraq.

This end strength increase will place a demand on our already stretched infrastructure – with your continued support, we can provide the adequate housing and quality of life our Marines and Marine families deserve. In addition to quality of life, we must ensure that installation assets and capabilities are always available to support operations and training

requirements. This is especially critical as we implement the lessons learned in combat and transition to new platforms, weapons, and training methods.

II. FY 2008 Infrastructure Support Overview

The Fiscal Year 2008 President's Budget includes \$1.86 billion for facilities and infrastructure programs; a 49 percent increase over the Fiscal Year 2007 President's Budget of \$1.25 billion. This \$1.86 billion consists of \$467 million for facility sustainment, \$117 million for restoration and modernization, \$240 million for Family Housing Public Private Venture seed money, operations, and maintenance of housing, and \$1.04 billion for military construction supporting both active and reserve forces.

For decades, we set aside our deteriorating barracks as a funding priority in order to maintain combat readiness, and now we find ourselves well below acceptable living standards. Bachelor housing is now our top military construction priority for Fiscal Year 2008. Our \$1.7 billion barracks investment plan in support of a 175,000 Marine end strength will provide adequate housing for our Marines by 2012. This initiative will provide facility support for bachelor enlisted quarters that includes new construction, modernization, sustainment, and furnishings.

The recent formation of the Marine Corps Special Operations Command, reinvestment in our aging infrastructure, and realigning our force structure has reached the full capacity of our existing facilities at our bases and stations. Additionally, new permanent facilities are required to support a 202,000 force structure. The Fiscal Year 2007 and 2008 Global War on Terrorism Supplemental requests provide an additional \$493 million in Family Housing and Military Construction to support the initial ramp up to 202,000 Marines. The Fiscal Year 2008 Military Construction and Family Housing request includes \$458 million in Family Housing and Military Construction earmarked to support the ramp up to 202,000 end strength.

We are determining the optimal permanent locations for these units based upon the composition of the additional units. Using these results, we are generating planning estimates for the types and sizes of facilities needed to support these forces, estimating timelines for completing environmental documentation, planning, design, and construction. Finally, in expectation that our end strength will increase before final construction is complete, we are planning to provide interim support facilities that could include lease, rental, or purchase of

temporary facilities. We are developing a plan that will ensure adequate facilities are available to support the phase-in and final operating capability of a 202,000 Marine Corps while meeting our environmental stewardship requirements.

III. Bachelor and Family Housing

Marines and their families serve with a sense of duty and loyalty to our country. This service entails sacrifice inherent in the military lifestyle. Typically, these include frequent relocations, often far from the Marine's extended family, as well as recurring deployments that separate families for months at a time. The strain these difficulties place on the individuals and their families has been exacerbated by the current operating tempo. Providing our Marines adequate housing is part of our commitment to them and speaks volumes to them and their families as they contemplate reenlisting – a critical component of our end strength increase.

Bachelor Housing. The Marine Corps is the youngest and has the fewest married personnel of the military services. Our young Marines sacrifice much, often serving multiple tours in harm's way, and we owe them appropriate and comfortable living spaces. Barracks are a critical element in supporting our warfighters – proper housing affects their morale and development.

Our goal is to house our junior enlisted bachelor personnel in pay grades of E-1 through E-5 in a 2+0 room standard that allows two junior enlisted Marines (E-1 to E-3) to share a room and bath. We believe that assigning two junior Marines to a room is the correct balance between the privacy desired by the Marines and the Marine Corps' goals of providing companionship, camaraderie, and unit cohesion. This balance provides the atmosphere necessary to motivate, train, and develop Marines, while fostering unit integrity. Noncommissioned officers in the pay grades of E4 and E5 are provided a private room with bath in a 2+0 room.

The Fiscal Year 2008 budget request builds on our 2006 Bachelor Enlisted Quarters Campaign Plan that focuses on the Quality of Life for single enlisted Marines and proposes an investment of \$1.7 billion in bachelor housing construction, modernization, sustainment, and furnishings over the next several years. We have dedicated a large portion of our facility investment in barracks projects. For Fiscal Years 2008-2011, we have tripled our historical average for new and replacement barracks construction – approximately \$317 million per year.

We are also committed to a seven-year replacement cycle for barracks furniture and prioritizing barracks repair projects to preempt a backlog of repairs.

Currently, the Marine Corps maintains 99,150 bachelor enlisted housing spaces worldwide: 82,790 are in the United States and 16,360 are in Japan. Based on an end strength of 175,000, we required an additional 16,330 spaces in the United States to adequately house our enlisted bachelor Marines at the end of fiscal year 2006. Your support for our Fiscal Year 2008 \$282 million Military Construction request for bachelor housing will allow us to continue to reduce this shortfall through ten barracks projects at seven bases located in Arizona, California, Hawaii, North Carolina, and Virginia. These bases account for over eighty-six percent of the current deficit to support 175,000 Marines.

Family Housing. Our 170,000 Marine Corps family members are an integral component of readiness. While many of these families are obtaining quality affordable housing in the private sector, our need for additional privatized or military housing is both long-standing and increasing.

With recent passage of the Fiscal Year 2007 Continuing Resolution, three Marine Corps Public Private Venture projects will be awarded in Fiscal Year 2007. With these projects, contracts will be in place by the end of Fiscal Year 2007 to complete the elimination of our substandard housing by 2012. Upon award, we will have successfully privatized approximately 97 percent of our worldwide inventory, eliminated another 2,700 inadequate units, and reduced our housing deficit by up to 418 homes. The 2007 funding provides for the continued privatization of Marine Corps Bases Camp Lejeune, Camp Pendleton, Hawaii, Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, and the first phase of privatization at Marine Corps Logistics Base Albany, Georgia and Westover Joint Air Reserve Base in Chicopee, Massachusetts. With nearly one hundred percent of our domestic inventory proposed for privatization by the end of Fiscal Year 2007, we will continue to build on our prior successes and use Public Private Ventures to help us address most of our remaining family housing requirement.

The Fiscal Year 2008 President's family housing baseline budget request is \$240 million. This addresses our housing shortage with \$188 million Public Private Venture seed money for additional privatized housing, \$12 million for traditional military construction improvements, and \$40 million for the operations, maintenance, and restoration of our existing military family housing. Our Fiscal Year 2008 Global War on Terrorism Supplemental Request is \$12 million for Public Private Venture seed money for additional privatized housing. Support for the Public

Private Venture funding, \$188 million baseline and \$12 million Global War on Terrorism Supplemental, allows us to address the requirement for additional family housing resulting from our end strength increase, the formation of Marine Corps Special Operations Command, as well as reducing our long-standing housing deficits.

We currently have nearly 24,000 owned, leased, or Public Private Venture family housing units worldwide. Combined with private sector investment, the Public Private Venture seed funding provides for 451 units, further reducing the family housing deficit, and adds a school at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. It also provides 580 units under our baseline request, and an additional 66 units under our Global War on Terror Supplemental request, at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton and Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms in California. Our Fiscal Year 2008 request includes \$12 million for traditional military construction to sustain and restore 96 mid-rise enlisted units at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan.

Our aggressive Public Private Venture program will continue to allow the Marine Corps to leverage private sector funds. To date, the Marine Corps has invested \$398 million to achieve \$2.5 billion in family housing construction and improvements. We have privatized eighty percent of our inventory to date and continue to see success from our Public Private Venture projects at Marine Corps installations in Arizona, California, Hawaii, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. Public Private Ventures have not only improved the homes in which our families live, they are also providing community support facilities such as community centers, playgrounds, greenscapes, etc., that help create neighborhoods and a sense of community.

The Marine Corps continues to increase our quality family housing inventory through Public Private Ventures and military construction where necessary. In addition, your support for full funding of the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) will allow more families to access quality affordable housing in the private sector. This capability is crucial since more than two-thirds of service members do not live on a military installation. Many families continue to prefer to live in military or Public Private Venture housing for a number of reasons, including financial reasons, safety, schools, and community support. We will continue with our Public Private Ventures and traditional military construction efforts to improve the homes necessary to supplement private sector housing.

With your past assistance, we have made significant progress in reducing our total number of inadequate homes. Our 2001 Family Housing Master plan identified nearly 17,700 inadequate housing units – most of which required significant revitalization or replacement. As of January of this year, we have reduced the number of inadequate homes in our inventory to approximately 2,700.

IV. Taking Care of our Marines and Their Families.

Just as every Marine makes a commitment to the Corps and the Nation when they earn the title Marine, we make an enduring commitment to every Marine and Marine family. Marines are renowned for “taking care of our own.” In addition to providing Marines and their families with appropriate pay and compensation, housing, infrastructure, and community services, our commitment to proper care for our combat wounded is unflinching.

We are fully involved in the Secretary of the Navy’s Special Review that is taking a comprehensive look at the care for our wounded warriors. Over the next three months, this wide-ranging review will study the full spectrum of care for our active and reserve Marines and Sailors and their families – from predeployment screenings to after they have left active service. Our support must target both Marines who suffer from the physical costs of this war, as well as those who carry unseen scars – those suffering from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). We feel strongly that all wounds of war should be characterized in the same manner – and our commitment to those Marines who suffer from these ailments will not falter.

We are also scrutinizing the support for our Marines and their families to ensure our family support programs remain on a wartime footing – particularly those that assist in integrating civilian, military, charitable, and Veterans Affairs programs. I have charged Marine commanders and noncommissioned officers at every level to aggressively monitor post-deployment mental health screenings, suicides, domestic violence, and divorce rates, monitor these indications closely and to stay engaged on these issues.

Casualty Assistance. Each fallen Marine is a tragic loss to the survivors, the Corps, and our Nation. We endeavor to honor their sacrifices with sincerity and commitment. Our Casualty Assistance Calls Officers are trained to treat next of kin and other family members as they would their own family. Rendering casualty assistance begins with the basic tenet that there is no

standard casualty call; each case is distinct, as families grieve in different ways. Assistance to surviving families is individually tailored to facilitate their transition through the stages of grief and the completion of the casualty process.

Wounded Warrior Regiment. While the support to our Marine Corps and families has been exceptional, I intend to increase this support through the creation of a Wounded Warrior Regiment. This regimental headquarters will provide centralized oversight of the care for our wounded Marines and assist in the integration of their support with military, Department of Veterans Affairs, charitable, and civilian systems. The regiment will have a battalion headquarters on each coast, commanded by officers personally selected by me. My criteria for this leadership will be rigorous, as I will seek to select only those officers with previous command experience. My staff is reviewing the fiscal requirements for this unit now – to include facilities, manning, and support requirements, which I will report to this committee when our findings are complete. I view this initiative as a personal priority to fulfill our commitment to these valiant Americans.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). As the quality of individual combat armor has increased, so have the number of blast survivors and Marines with Traumatic Brain Injury. Mild to moderate traumatic brain injuries can be difficult to diagnose and yet can cause changes in personality, cognition, and memory that significantly impair a service member's ability to make the life and death decisions required of them while in a combat environment. TBI and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) have many symptoms in common; PTSD can co-occur with TBI. Recent measures to mitigate the impact of traumatic brain injuries to individual Marines and their units include the release of a medical guidance letter from the Medical Officer of the Marine Corps outlining proper diagnosis and treatment strategies.

Mine Resistant Ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicles. The signature weapon that we face in Iraq is the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) – the principal cause for the marked increase that we see in Traumatic Brain Injury and amputation. The MRAP vehicles are an example of our adaptation to this evolving threat, and our continuing effort to provide the very best technology available in the shortest amount of time to protect our Marines. The MRAP is 400% more effective than the up-armored HMMWV in preventing injury or death from enemy blasts. Our commanders in the Al Anbar province have determined the MRAP to be so successful that they have submitted a request that will allow for every vehicle that goes “outside

the wire” to be an MRAP. The USMC requirement is 3,700 MRAP vehicles, and we are aggressively pursuing the acquisition of this rapidly emerging requirement.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The science of diagnosing and treating Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder continues to evolve. The Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Training and Education Command, Naval Health Research Center, and others are studying ways to identify risk and protective factors for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and to increase our resilience to stress. By improving the awareness of both individuals and our leaders, we can provide early identification and psychological first aid to those who are stress-injured. Better screening and referral of at-risk Marines is underway via pre- and post-deployment standard health assessments that specifically screen for mental health problems. Navy Medicine has established new Deployment Health Centers with additional mental health providers readily available to treat Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other combat stress injuries. The Department of Veterans Affairs has established comprehensive guidelines for managing Post-Traumatic Stress, which are available to all services. The Marine Corps, Navy Medicine, and Veterans Affairs have coordinated a Seamless Transition program to help our Marine veterans move smoothly into the Veterans Affairs treatment system to get the help they need and deserve. In addition, Veterans Affairs Readjustment Centers at 207 communities around the country now provide mental health services for both active and discharged veterans and their families.

Combat/Operational Stress Control (COSC). Battlefields are familiar territory for Marines – we train Marines to excel in chaotic and unpredictable surroundings. Yet all Marines will experience combat/operational stress to some extent, as transient symptoms for most, but as persistent stress injuries for others. Managing combat stress is vital to the operation of the Marine Corps as a fighting force and the long-term health and well-being of Marines and their families. All deploying Marines receive warrior preparation, transition briefs, and health assessments. In addition, mental health professionals or specially trained medical officers brief Marine leaders on the prevention and management of adverse stress reactions. We have also implemented the innovative Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) program, which embeds mental health providers with ground forces. Operational Stress Control and Readiness provides early identification and treatment of combat/operational stress problems, attempts to defeat the stigma of combat stress, and overcomes the barriers to care.

The Combat/Operational Stress Control deployment cycle resources for families include the Family Deployment Support Program. The program consists of Family Readiness Days, family crisis support services, Return and Reunion Briefs for spouses, and building a sense of community among our military families.

Marine For Life. The Marine For Life Injured Support program assists seriously and very seriously injured Marines, Sailors who served with Marines, and their families. This program bridges the gap between military medical care and the Department of Veterans Affairs by providing individualized support through the transition period.

Individual case tracking and enduring support for our injured Marines and Sailors complements the Office of the Secretary of Defense's Military Severely Injured Center, which provides around-the-clock injured support service. Marine For Life provides support tailored to an individual's needs, including pre- and post-service separation case tracking, assistance with the physical evaluation board process, and an interactive website that acts as a clearinghouse for all disability and benefit information. The program also provides employment assistance through a preexisting Marine For Life network that establishes local coordination with veterans, public, private, and charitable organizations that provide support to our injured warriors.

In April 2005, Marine For Life integrated Marine Corps and Department of Veterans Affairs' handling of Marine cases by assigning a Marine field grade officer to the Department of Veterans Affairs Headquarters' Seamless Transition Office. This integrates Marines into the Department of Veterans Affairs system and provides service oversight of Veterans Health Administration care and Veterans Benefits Administration benefits delivery. The Marine For Life program provides the direct point of contact for problem resolution for Marines within the Veterans Administration system.

V. Facility Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization

Funding to sustain our facilities is crucial to keep our buildings and training ranges ready to support the mission and provide an acceptable quality of life. In the past, our infrastructure was not replaced at an appropriate rate, causing portions of our infrastructure plant account to be used past its normal service life. As a consequence, the Marine Corps used an increasing percentage of our facility sustainment funds to bind together old, rather than building newer, more economical structures. This resulted in significant numbers of facility sustainment projects

being deferred due to a lack of funds, directly degrading the living and working conditions in barracks, mess halls, and other facilities in highly visible and negative ways. In addition, we suffered a "quiet crisis" with respect to less obvious repairs to steam plants, runways, sewer lines, and roads. These requirements can no longer being ignored.

A number of years ago, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) developed a model to determine the amount of funding to sustain our facilities. In Fiscal Year 2008, OSD raised the funding guidance level from 95% to 100% of the model estimate. Because of pressing demands from other priorities in the Marine Corps, we have proposed a program 11% below the OSD guidance. Though this is below the OSD guidance, we will manage this investment level to meet our most pressing facilities operational requirements during Fiscal Year 2008.

VI. Military Construction – Unit Facilities

The facilities we are proposing will support the growth to 202,000 Marines and augment the stand-up of the MARSOC at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina and Camp Pendleton, California. Our challenge is to maintain our progress in supporting our 175,000 end strength while pushing forward on construction of additional facilities to support our increase.

The balance of our Military Construction request will augment the stand-up of the MV-22 aircraft in North Carolina, training ranges and classrooms in North Carolina and California, the first stage of barracks replacement supporting the 3rd Recruit Battalion at Parris Island, South Carolina, and the second stage of student officer quarters replacement at The Basic School at Quantico, Virginia. Over the long term, when coupled with the end strength increase, any deferment of our new construction will adversely affect readiness, retention, and the quality of life of our Marines and Marine families.

VII. Military Construction, Navy Reserve

The Marine Forces Reserve is an integral and vital portion of our total force. Marine Forces Reserve is comprised of almost 39,600 Selected Marine Corps Reserve personnel at 183 sites, spread throughout 48 states, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico. Their dispersed nature makes the maintenance of Marine Corps Reserve facilities a considerable challenge. The Military Construction, Navy Reserve program for exclusive Marine Corps construction must prioritize limited funding to address \$130 million in deferred construction projects. Over 50

percent of the reserve centers Marines use are more than 30 years old and of these, 35 percent are more than 50 years old.

In addition to being challenged by antiquated facilities, our Marines use equipment that is bigger than it was decades ago when our facilities were built. We continue to use inadequate facilities built to accommodate antiquated equipment and technology, such as manual typewriters, M151 jeeps, and M-48 tanks. Much of the newer equipment requires appropriately constructed or modified maintenance facilities, as well as adequate electrical power and other support infrastructure upgrades to maintain combat readiness. The electrical demand on our facilities has increased significantly due to the widespread use of electronic devices and technologically advanced equipment, such as weapons systems simulators.

To help us address these challenges, the President's Fiscal Year 2008 Budget for Military Construction, Navy Reserve contains \$28.8 million in appropriations request for construction and \$829 thousand in planning and design. This program addresses our most pressing requirements, providing new Reserve Training Centers and a Vehicle Maintenance Facility in Dayton, Ohio, Selfridge, Michigan, Miramar, California, Austin, Texas, as well as a warehouse in Quantico, Virginia.

VIII. Conclusion

This Nation has high expectations of her Corps – as she should. Your Marines are answering the call around the globe, performing with distinction in the face of great hardships. As they continue to serve in harm's way, our moral imperative is to fully support them – we owe them the full resources required to complete the tasks we have given them. Now more than ever, they need the sustained support of the American people and the Congress to simultaneously maintain our readiness, reset the force during an extended war, modernize to face the challenges of the future, and fulfill our commitment to Marine families. Again, I thank you for the opportunity to report to you on their behalf.